

VALLOMBROSA: A MAJOR TRANSPERSONAL EVENT

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In late May of 1913, the Association for Transpersonal Psychology sponsored a three-day meeting of considerable, perhaps historical, significance: the first Conference on Applications of Trnspersonal Psychology. In this report, I will attempt to give a brief description of the conference, discuss its distinctiveness, and consider what isrequired for such an event to be successful.

Organizers of the meeting had initially planned to invite a relatively small number of carefully selected participants known to be active throughout the United States and Canada in transpersonal therapy, counseling, education, and! or research. As word filtered out that the conference was to occur, many additional well-qualified persons asked if they might attend. Since there appeared to be no good reason why they should not come, the roster gradually swelled to a final total of 128 unusually well-motivated men and women, who met for three days of transpersonal dialogue in Menlo Park, California, at a serene, wooded retreat named Vallombrosa,

Besides physicians, clinical psychologists, non-clinical psychologists, social workers, professors and teachers of numerous kinds, the group included priests, philosophers, physiologists, psychic healers, spiritual counselors, an ex-astronaut, and a Tibetan lama. These external career paths were by and large of far less interest to the conference members than their inner paths, or disciplines, which included various forms of Yoga, Buddhism, Sufism, mystic Christianity, philosophically-rooted astrology, psychosynthesis, and numerous unclassified syntheses of transpersonal belief and practice which individual participants had developed for themselves in the course of living.

participants

*various
inner paths*

*emphasison
cooperation*

It is well known in transpersonal circles that when followers of different spiritual paths assemble in one place, they too often engage in interpersonal bickering and cosmic onepmanship relating to different belief systems. Such disputes and personality clashes have undermined spiritual intercommunication throughout history despite the fact *that* loving cooperation is a basic principle **in** all authentic transpersonal systems. As Daniel Goleman and other scholars have observed, "The Final Teaching at the core of all faiths **IS** essentially one and the same." The 1973 Vallombrosa Conference was delightfully free of ego-ridden wrangling.

Early in the going, a speaker handed down The Word concerning The Best System of Therapy, and was rather ill-received by a number of listeners. This incipient conflict, however, was soon transcended via the diplomacy of the conference chairman and the good will of the majority of the group. Here was a large body of people, *mirabllle dictu*, apparently able to practice, as well as to preach, the transpersonal principles of accepting human defects with a kindly grin, and getting on with the business at hand.

presenters

The conference format **was** quite flexible and informal. Not a single paper was read, but there were enough scheduled total-group events to preserve a sense of conference integration, and to provide a medium for necessary announcements. Total-group activities included presentations by LaryssaNechay on psychic therapy; Henry Drake's philosophical perspective on transpersonal psychotherapy; a description by ChOgyam Trungpa, Rinpoche, of his Tibetan Buddhist therapeutic community; and a report by Ed Mitchell concerning his new research institute and its need for reputable and specially knowledgeable referral resources for persons in all parts of the nation who have psychic/spiritual difficulties.

panels:

There were also three panel discussions for the entire assembly:

therapy,

A. "The Nature of Transpersonal Psychology," and "The Transpersonal Attitude in Psychotherapy," by Tony Sutich, Jim Fadiman, Tom Weide, and Anne Armstrong. This panel was followed by an unplanned conference highlight. an informal group meeting with Tony Sutich, founder of the transpersonal movement. Tony shared many of his transpersonal ideas and experiences in a delightfully personal way.

education.

B. "Transpersonal Education," with Hugh Redmond, Paul Herman, Keitetsu Norton and Robert Frager.

C. "Psychic Healing: Questions that Come Up," led by

Shirley Winston, with Anne Armstrong, Marilyn and George Anderson, Martha Martin, and Lee Sannella. The excellent questions raised at this panel are paraphrased here:

and healing

1. What are healers actually doing when they heal?
2. Does psychic healing work?
3. Is there a way to do it better?
4. Can it be taught?
5. How can one evaluate "students"? How evaluate practitioners? Who can or should do this evaluation?
6. How should healers handle the issue of payment?
7. Why do people heal?
8. Why do people seek healing?
9. What are the dangers to healers?
10. What are the dangers to "patients"?
11. What are the problems of overselling healing?
12. What are the problems of knowing (or not knowing) what results will (or will not) occur?
13. How can healers deal with the problem of being swamped by requests?
14. What is the role of "belief"?
15. What are the legal issues in this field?

Other pre-scheduled activities were morning meditations led by two Zen priests and by Jeanette Stobie of Arica; a film by Martha Martin on transpersonal business management; and two interest groups: "Transpersonal Work in Public Institutions," led by Steve Mitchell, and "Popularization of Spiritual Practices," led by Michael Searle and Jim Fadiman. Fadiman, president of the sponsoring body, Association for Transpersonal Psychology, was also the conference chairman. His pointed humor and unflinching charm exerted a pervasively positive influence on the meeting, as did the beauty of the setting at Vallombrosa.

other activities

Unscheduled events included miscellaneous presentations, experiences, and informal small-group discussions of particular topics such as aikido, astrology, healing, meditation, relations between Eastern and Western methods of therapy and growth, Sufi dancing, transpersonal education, and transpersonal therapy. During the ample amount of unscheduled time, many participants developed or consolidated strong personal ties with others, and/or simply wandered about the grounds.

What made this conference so distinctive? Three main things. First, the large number of professionals, of deep transpersonal orientation, who appeared for a minimally-advertised conference. Many came great distances, at their own expense, to a meeting clearly described in advance as one *not* em-

what made this conference distinctive?

phasizing professional advancement through personal presentations. Second, the remarkably serene and benign feeling-tone of the event. While many conferences induce a certain euphoria in some participants, most conferences lead eventually to considerable tension, irritability and fatigue. Generally, the Vallombrosa conferees were quietly happy, benign, friendly, and cheerful, even when talking seriously with someone from a very different background. It was not a question of being serious *or* of being happy; the conference was apparently a good example of many people engaged in Joyful Work.

Third, several new projects were initiated during the conference which may have lasting importance. For example, several people are now working with Ed Mitchell to set up counseling and referral services, including *non-profit* services, for people with psychic/spiritual difficulties. Another group of therapists is meeting informally from time to time at the home of Elizabeth Kunkel, to discuss their various ways of working. Robert Frager has started a tape exchange. Hugh Redmond is coordinating a communication network of transpersonal educators. And Frances Clark, in collaboration with others, has established a Transpersonal Therapy Institute. Undoubtedly, there are still other constructive outcomes of the conference which are not known to the writer of this report

ingredients

Some of the reasons this conference was so pleasant and productive are relatively intangible. But consider these factors: a beautiful, peaceful setting, with plenty of grass and trees, and pleasant weather; a gracious, humorous chairman; a program which included only a few speakers, and speakers who were known in advance to be able to present ideas interestingly; participants known in advance to be greatly concerned with service, and relatively unconcerned with status; and ample free time for spontaneous interactions and for contemplation. It takes more than a serene setting and well-chosen people, however, to produce a significant event. The principle importance of the Vallombrosa meeting was this: The conference demonstrated that America, even professional America, now seems ready for much transpersonal activity.

importance

LOWRY, Richard 1., A. *H. Maslow: An intellectual portrait.* Monterey, California, Brooks-Cole, 1973. \$5.95, 110 pp.

A sensible critical work which discusses the development of Maslow's major ideas. Lowry makes excellent use of Maslow's unpublished personal journals in presenting in context how Maslow's contributions grew, changed, developed and matured.

BOOK REVIEWS

James Fadiman

SPIEGELBERG, FREDERIC. *Images from Tibetan art: A folio of eight reproductions for coloring and meditation.* San Francisco: Lodestar Press, 1972. \$2.00.

Spiegelberg introduces us to a new world of iconography. The essay, the comments from unpublished letters of Jung and the forms themselves are open not only to our inspection, but are intended to be used. This is art but not the external art of the West. Included are preliminary instructions for developing art that is visible only to the inner eye. "What counts ultimately, however, is the complementary color to what your eyes have seen. Every light has its shadow, every success its drawback.... These secondary, or responsive colors are the effective ones as far as the lasting power of the charm is concerned."

James Fadiman

BABAHARI DASS. *The yellow book.* The Bountiful Lord's Delivery Service, Lama Fd.: 444, San Cristobal, New Mexico 87564.

This is a book of teachings and stories from the chalkboard of Baba Had Dass. Teacher and guide to many, Had Dass is probably best known in this country as Ram Dass's teacher.

Sonja Margulies

The teachings have Ashtanga Yoga as their foundation but it is the yogi's own frankness, openness and sincerity that make this communication so lively and direct.

Some are born with a quality of music, poetry, mathematics, etc. I was born with the quality of beggar. (One who possesses nothing of his own).

Yoga is for sinners.

Yoga makes a man's heart soft.

The yoga of householder is a very hard yoga. Not for everyone. Be householdersaints.

What you see and feel is your own creation.

CAPRIO, BETTY *Experiments in prayer*. Notre Dame, Ind.: Ave Maria Press, 1973. \$2.95, 185 pp.

Thomas N. Weide

A rose is a rose is a rose. And a good book on basic transpersonal topics is a valuable item, whatever may be its specific content and orientation. This manual by Betty Caprio is concerned with the very basic subject of how to help others, and oneself, more easily experience the ultimate. As such this is a widely useful transpersonal text: a highly readable and adaptable collection of proven techniques for converting transpersonal concepts into everyday language; for encouraging persons who are a little bit aware of the ultimate to expand that awareness; and for leaders of transpersonal groups and/or individuals looking for new ways to raise their own consciousness.

Betty Caprio's conception of prayer dearly embraces many experiences often called meditation by others; most notable is a section entitled "Yoga-type Meditation." To give some sense of the range she covers, here are a few examples of exercises from the book: Spontaneous Prayers; Prayers with Music: Top Ten Prayer, Opera Prayer, *Superstar* Prayer, "This is Your Life" in Music; Early Christian's Meditation; Soap Opera Meditation; Jungle Meditation; TV Meditation; Closeness Prayer; Isolation Prayer; and Mother Earth Prayer.

The book requires very little translation of Christian terms in order to be immediately useful to Sufis, Buddhists, or literate meditators of any kind. And, for the many among us who interact fairly often with adolescents, it is ready to use as is.

ROBERTS, JANE, *The Seth material*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1970. \$2.95, 304 pp.

ROBERTS, JANE, *Seth speaks: The eternal validity of the soul*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1972. \$7.95, 505 pp.

Marilyn Anderson

Seth is presented as a personality that speaks through the author, Jane Roberts. Whether you accept that explanation or not, the theories, whatever their origin, are fascinating. *The Seth Material* explains how the contact between Seth and Jane Roberts developed and covers some of Seth's philosophy: *Seth*

Speaks is dictated by Seth, who refers to himself as a "ghost writer." You are sure to be challenged by the wide range of new concepts in these two books.

GOLAS, THADDEUS. *The lazy man's guide to enlightenment*. Palo Alto: The Seed Center, 1972. \$1.50, 80 pp.

I initially sneered at the title. But then, a few weeks later, I realized how lazy I am and went out and bought the book. It was an excellent move.

Spencer Sherman

The legend of the Great Stupa and the life story of the Lotus Born Guru. Tibetan Nyingma Meditation Center. Berkeley: Dharma Publishing, 1973. \$2.95, 144pp.

Two exquisite, mystical tales from Tibet: past, present and future. The building of the Great Stupa symbolizes the mind precepts for the visionary during this Age of Darkness.

Paul Clemens

The diamond-pure lotus arises from the slime of the lake to bloom above the surface. The second tale relates principle events in the life of the Lotus Born Guru, Padilla Sambhava. This magical, dream-like story is a way of living, speaking and being aware. Etherically illustrated.

Travel guide resource for your visit to Vallombrosa. Discover the best of Vallombrosa so you can plan your trip right. Get away to Vallombrosa! Enjoy the monuments, history, and natural setting. Explore attractions like Valdarno and Abbazia di Vallombrosa as you discover things to see and do in Vallombrosa. Known for. Monuments, Historical Buildings and Nature. Top Hotels in Vallombrosa. Estimated price for 1 night / 2 adults. Save Hotel Croce di Savoia to your lists. Vallombrosa: A major transpersonal event Varieties of Transpersonal experiences: Observati Varieties of transpersonal therapy Various meanings of transcendence Video Game Play and Consciousness Development: A T Voluntary control of internal states: Psychologica Vulnerability and power in the therapeutic process... Weide: Vallombrosa: A major transpersonal event. 1974, Vol.6 #1. Crampton: Psychological energy transformations: Developing positive polarization. Watts: Psychotherapy and Eastern religion: Metaphysical bases of psychiatry. Clark: Rediscovering transpersonal education. Campbell & McMahon: Religious-type experience in the context of humanistic and transpersonal psychology. Casper: Space therapy and the Maitri project.